

The Colt Detective Special

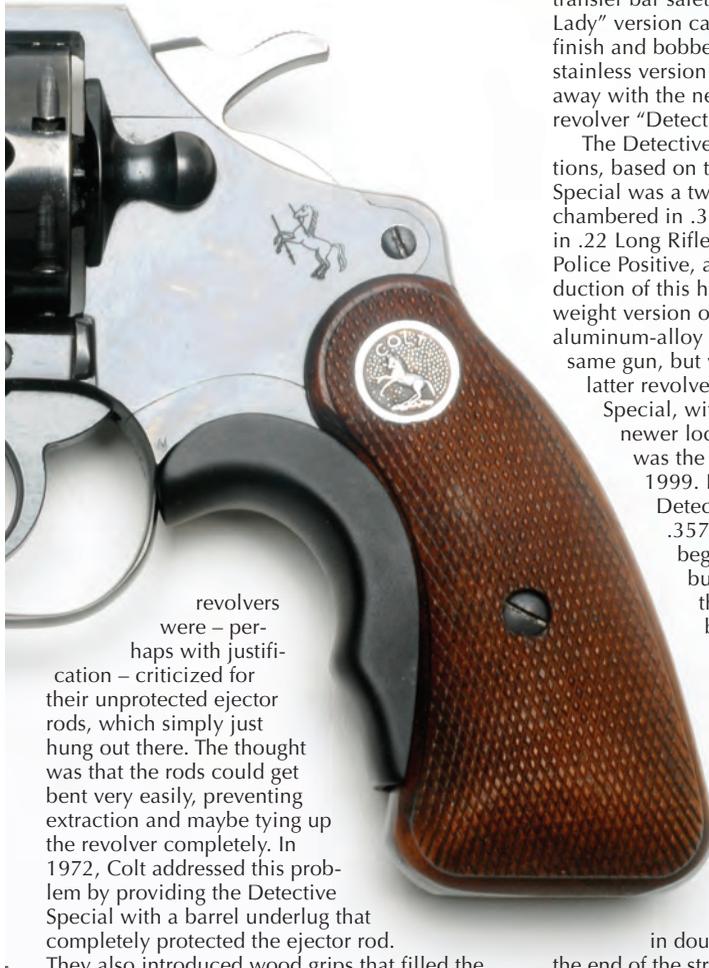
was then prevented from snagging. In the 1960s, the grip frame was shortened to the same size as the similar Colt Agent revolver. This was a manufacturing decision, enabling the previously different frames to be made on the same machinery. Grips were provided on the Detective Special that filled in the extra space at the bottom, giving the same exact grip profile as before. Some three-inch barreled revolvers were offered. Finish choice was always blue or nickel-plate.

In 1972, another change was made. The Detective Special and many other Colt

In 1984, a matte-finish cheaper version called the Commando Special was offered. Then, in 1986, Colt ceased production of the Detective Special and other D-frame revolvers. The reason given was cost of manufacture. The public outcry over this deed finally convinced the company to re-introduce the "Dick Special," in a form identical to before. This occurred in 1988. Then, in 1995, the name was changed to "Colt 38 SF-VI." It wasn't the same gun. The internals did away with the old V-shaped mainspring that had been around since the 1890s, and incorporated a transfer bar safety system. A "38 SF-VI Special Lady" version came out in 1996. It had a bright finish and bobbed hammer. Shortly after this, a stainless version was introduced. Then Colt did away with the new designation and renamed the revolver "Detective Special II."

The Detective Special spawned some variations, based on the same D-frame. The Banker's Special was a two-inch barreled six-shot revolver chambered in .38 S&W and .38 New Police, and in .22 Long Rifle. It used the same frame as the Police Positive, and had a shorter cylinder. Production of this handgun stopped in 1941. A light-weight version of the Detective Special was the aluminum-alloy framed Cobra. The Agent was the same gun, but with a shorter grip frame. These latter revolvers evolved, as did the Detective Special, with shrouded ejector rods and newer lockwork. The final permutation was the Magnum Carry, introduced in 1999. It was a beefed-up stainless Detective Special II, chambering the .357 Magnum cartridge. As Colt began to bow out of the revolver business, the Magnum Carry and the Detective Special II ceased to be in the year 2000.

The Detective Special inspired some competitors, notably the Smith & Wesson Chief Special, and the stainless Model 60. The Colt had one big advantage in that has always been a six-shot, versus five for the S&Ws. Smith & Wesson boasted of a better double action pull for its revolvers, criticizing the "stacked" feel of the Colt, where the trigger pull in double action stiffened a bit toward the end of the stroke. And the Colt was slightly larger than the J-frame Smiths. But the Colt had its fervent admirers to the end. As the original swing-out cylinder "belly gun" it has become a true collectable classic today. After all these years, it's still entirely suitable as a concealable personal defense arm. Those who have them treasure them!



revolvers were – perhaps with justification – criticized for their unprotected ejector rods, which simply just hung out there. The thought was that the rods could get bent very easily, preventing extraction and maybe tying up the revolver completely. In 1972, Colt addressed this problem by providing the Detective Special with a barrel underlug that completely protected the ejector rod.

They also introduced wood grips that filled the gap behind the trigger. Previously, many owners used a grip adapter to fill this space. One of these adapters is employed on the handgun illustrated in this article, which was made in 1959. The wood grips subsequently were replaced in the mid-1980s with rubber "combat style" grips.